New Sellers' Market May Be Short-Lived

New York — Noted hospitality analyst Bjorn Hanson delivered good news and bad news to meeting planners — and the same to hoteliers — in his keynote speech at MeetingWorld, the annual conference and trade show hosted by *MeetingNews* and *Successful Meetings*. The event took place at the Grand Hyatt New York on July 12-13.

EVOLVING ATTENDEES

Meeting planners must keep on top of societal trends so they can adapt to the changing demographics of attendees, according to panelists at MeetingWorld's general session, titled "Social Study: Creating Meetings in a Changing World."

The panelists urged planners to read as much as they can about societal trends, talk to people, and observe changes in their own neighborhoods.

The panel was moderated by Lalia Rach, associate dean at New York University's Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism and Sports Management. Panelists included meetings management consultant and trainer Joan Eisenstodt of Washington-based Eisenstodt Associates, and Toronto-based Jim Carroll, an author, speaker and futurist.

Key issues discussed included the following:

- People are staying in the workplace longer, leading to employees from four different generations working together for the first time. The panelists discussed the impact of this on meetings content and delivery, the creation of materials to appeal to these divergent groups, and how to make sure the oldest don't feel irrelevant and the youngest don't get marginalized.
- As the population ages, planners must determine whether meeting facilities are designing and equipping their properties to accommodate older guests' needs, and how that could impact site selection. Eisenstodt noted the need for better lighting, easy-to-maneuver doorknobs, and handlebars in bathtubs to accommodate older guests.
- The panelists posited that people want flexibility in their jobs. They projected that in a few years nearly 50 percent of the work force will work from home, and that many will leave positions within five years and will hold three to four careers and nearly 20 jobs during their lifetimes. The discussion turned on how this affects meeting audiences, and planners' ability to reach them.
- Hispanics are projected by 2015 to make up 50 percent of the U.S. population. Even though most of them may be fluent in English by then, Carroll pointed out a recent study indicating that Hispanics are more comfortable conducting business and having contracts written in Spanish. At issue in the session: Are planners ready for simultaneous translations and bilingual marketing and legal materials?

Eisenstodt and Carroll described an evolving present and a different fu-